

III. Remarks

Claims 1 – 44 are pending. Claims 9, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 35, 36, and 40 have been amended in accordance with the U.S. rules of practice and not for reasons relating to patentability. The filing fee has been calculated according to the above-amendments.

Claims 1 – 44 are under consideration in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, an early action on the merits is respectfully requested.

The examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if in the opinion of the examiner such a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

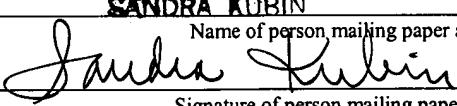
Respectfully submitted,



Priscilla L. Ferguson
Registration No. 42,531

Date: 10 February, 2005

HAYNES AND BOONE, LLP
901 Main Street, Suite 3100
Dallas, Texas 75202-5940
Telephone: 214-651-5634
Facsimile: 214-200-0853
File: 32135.7
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